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NO PLAYS EXCHANGED

HALF HOUR DRAMAS



Hands All
Round



T.S.DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS CHICAGO

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|--|--------------|
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| Tony, the Convict, 5 acts, 2¼ hrs. | (25c) 7 4 |

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

HANDS ALL ROUND

A PATRIOTIC PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

IRENE JEAN CRANDALL

AUTHOR OF

"For Freedom"



CHICAGO

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

[1913]

PS3505
P252 H3
1918

HANDS ALL ROUND

CHARACTERS.

MR. MATTHEW AUSTIN.....*A Successful Business Man*
FRANK*The Son*
MRS. AUSTIN.....*The Wife*
STELLA.....*The Daughter*
NANCY WHEELOCK.....*The Girl Across the Street*
KATIE O'BRIEN.....*Cook at the Austins'*

TIME—*A Bright Saturday Afternoon in June, 1918.*

PLACE—*The Austins' Living-Room.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty-five Minutes.*



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STORY OF THE PLAY.

Mrs. Austin is grieving because her only son Frank has been away from home nine months and no word has come from him. He was expelled from college, quarreled with his father and disappeared. Mrs. Austin watches for a letter and never loses faith in her boy. Mr. Austin is bitter against Frank and says he will never forgive him. He wishes for a service flag in the window even if the blue star turned to gold.

Stella, Frank's sister, is doing a little war work, but is frivolous and is not willing to take up any serious duties. She comes in to show her mother a new hat and her father reproaches her for extravagance in war times. Mr. Austin tells his wife that the night Frank left home some money that he had hidden in the library table disappeared. He is sure that Frank took the money and went on a trip to Honolulu.

This is Frank's nineteenth birthday and Katie, the Irish cook, has made a birthday cake for him. She believes that he is coming home, because a fortune teller said so.

Nancy Wheelock, the girl who lives across the street, comes in to bring Stella some old kid gloves to line aviators' jackets. Since her brother Tom has enlisted she has taken his job in the machine shop. "We girls must hold the home lines until the boys come back." Nancy reads a letter from a college friend who is a nurse in one of the cantonments and pleads with Stella to become a nurse, but the indolent society girl is not willing to make the sacrifice. Stella tells Nancy, who believes that Frank has enlisted, that he took some money the night he left home. Nancy, unshaken in her faith in him, determines to prove him innocent. She searches the table drawer and at last finds the money. Stella calls her mother and father, and just after Frank's honesty is proved, he appears at the door in a uniform. His mother, Nancy and Stella welcome him with joy, but his father holds aloof. Frank has been seriously wounded and his account of the French hospital, added to the appeal that Nancy has

made, stirs Stella's better nature and she announces her intention of becoming a nurse.

As Mr. Austin listens to Frank's story of air fighting in France his pride in the boy banishes all other feelings and he goes to him with forgiveness. The climax comes when the young aviator shows his war cross and the mother's and father's cup of joy is full.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

MR. AUSTIN is a man of fifty with gray hair and a stern and commanding manner. He wears a summer business suit.

FRANK AUSTIN is an attractive, happy-go-lucky fellow of nineteen, with winning ways. His right arm is disabled. He wears a uniform.

The Publishers advise that his costume have such variations as not to interfere in any way with the Government regulations regarding the wearing of uniforms. It is, of course, inferred that such costumes will be procured from a costumer who undoubtedly will be able to supply something that will answer the purpose and avoid any criticism.

MRS. AUSTIN is a sweet, motherly woman of forty-five with hair slightly touched with gray. She wears a summer dress appropriate for a middle-aged woman in prosperous circumstances.

STELLA AUSTIN is a frivolous society girl of twenty-four. She has an indifferent, indolent manner. She wears a stylish light afternoon dress.

NANCY WHEELOCK is nineteen, full of life, spirit and originality. She has independence, charm and warmth of feeling. She wears a simple shirt waist and skirt and a sailor hat.

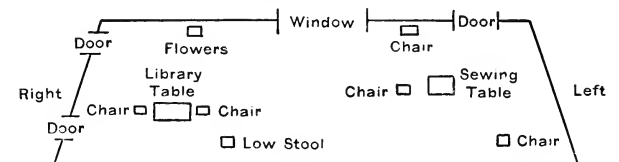
KATIE O'BRIEN is an Irish cook, about forty years old. She has red hair and bright eyes. She wears a blue cotton dress and a large kitchen apron.

PROPERTIES.

Library table with books, magazines and papers, small sewing table, four or five chairs, low stool, window curtains and small stand with vase of flowers.

Newspaper and garden spade for Mr. Austin. Knitting and handkerchief for Mrs. Austin. Hat, box of old kid gloves and fancy bath towel for Stella. Birthday cake for Katie. Traveling bag and war cross for Frank. Long white kid gloves, letter, magazine and greenbacks for Nancy.

SCENE PLOT.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

HANDS ALL ROUND

SCENE: *The living-room in the AUSTINS' prosperous home in a small college town. The room is tastefully furnished. Large library table with magazines and books at R. Small sewing table at L. with knitting materials. A chair on either side of library table. A chair on the right of sewing table. Another chair down L. A vase of garden flowers on stand near window. Door up R. leads into music room. Door down R. leads into kitchen. Door at L. C. opens outdoors.*

Before the curtain rises STELLA is heard playing snatches of patriotic airs on the piano. At rise, MRS. AUSTIN is standing by the window, evidently watching for some one. She is a sweet, patient woman of forty-five, her hair just touched with gray. MR. AUSTIN, a large gray-haired man of fifty, is lounging in a comfortable chair to the L. of the library table, reading a newspaper. STELLA, at the piano in the next room, cannot be seen. MR. AUSTIN'S brows are wrinkled into a frown and there is a stern look about his mouth. He glances up from his paper and sees his wife standing by the window.

MR. AUSTIN. Are you expecting somebody, Ma? You've been looking out of that window for fifteen minutes. (MRS. AUSTIN turns toward him with a sad, patient expression on her face.)

MRS. AUSTIN. I was watching for the postman. He's late this afternoon.

MR. A. (*gruffly*). Humph! Watching for him won't bring him.

MRS. A. I know that, but I like to go to the door myself when he rings the bell. Here he is, coming up the street now. (*Turning from the window with deep disappointment.*) Oh, he is going by.

MR. A. (*looks at his wife with keen eyes as she goes to the little sewing table at L., takes up her knitting and sits*

down to the R. of the table). You're foolish, Mary—always looking for the letter that never comes.

MRS. A. But I can't give up hoping, Matthew. I *know* we'll hear from Frank some day.

MR. A. (*sternly*). It's nine months since he disappeared and he hasn't sent us one word in all that time.

MRS. A. (*gently*). You were so angry with him, Matthew, that the boy felt he was not wanted at home any more.

MR. A. Angry. Of course I was angry. He disgraced me.

MRS. A. It was only a college scrape. Frank is not a bad boy; just full of life and fun.

(MR. A. *gets up and walks the floor in his excitement*.)

MR. A. He's an idle, good-for-nothing fellow. What has he ever done but spend my hard earned money?

MRS. A. (*with sweet remonstrance*). You haven't given him time. He's only a boy.

MR. A. Haven't given him time, you say? When I was his age I had been earning my living for three years.

MRS. A. He's nineteen. Today is his birthday. (*The tears come to her eyes and she dries them with her handkerchief*.)

MR. A. I'm disappointed in my children, both of them. All my life I've worked hard, saved and made money, and what does it all amount to? My son has disgraced me and my daughter does nothing but buy clothes and go to dances and—what do you call those parties where women stand around and chatter?

MRS. A. Teas?

MR. A. Yes—teas—coffees—cocoas—and all the other silly doings.

MRS. A. Stella is a sweet girl.

MR. A. There she is in there now, drumming on the piano.

MRS. A. (*proudly*). She plays as well as any girl in town. She is an accomplished young lady.

MR. A. And think what I paid for her (*scornfully*) accomplishments. I wish my children would do something

useful. (*Musing.*) Perhaps, if I hadn't had any money to spend on them they would be different. There are the Wheelocks across the street. Tom had a good position and supported his mother before the war and now he has enlisted. And Nancy is a plucky girl, who has always made her own way.

MRS. A. I *know* the children will turn out all right. Stella has taken up some war work.

MR. A. (*interrupting*). Playing at it—filling in time between luncheons and bridge parties.

MRS. A. Wait, Matthew, and you will be proud of the children some day. We must have faith in them. We mothers know that. From the time we guide their stumbling little feet and try to teach them to walk in the right way until we come to the end of the road we have to have patience and faith.

MR. A. But that won't make a man of Frank now.

MRS. A. It may.

MR. A. (*stubbornly*). No—he has disobeyed me and I will never forgive him—never. I don't want to hear his name.

MRS. A. Soften your heart, Matthew.

STELLA, in a pretty summer dress, comes in from U. R. She is twenty-four, frivolous and indifferent. She carries a stylish and expensive hat in her hand.

STELLA. See my new hat, mother! Isn't it a beauty?

MRS. A. Very pretty, dear.

MR. A. How much did it cost?

STELLA. The bill comes later.

MR. A. I thought you said you were going to stop buying hats and give the money to the Red Cross.

STELLA (*yawning*). Life in this town is such a bore that shopping is my only excitement. But this is positively my last extravagance. I saw it in the window and it was such a love of a hat I couldn't resist the temptation.

MR. A. No, you never go without anything you want. But in war times you must be more economical.

STELLA. Well, you give to the Red Cross and subscribe to the Liberty Loan. (*She puts her new hat on the sewing*

table, takes up a box of old kid gloves, sits down in chair down L. and begins to sort the gloves.)

MR. A. And so does everybody else. Go down to the Flats and you will see a Liberty Loan card in every laborer's window. Every man of them doing his bit. (*He goes to window.*) I look across the street and see the service flag that hangs in the Wheelock's window for Tom and I'd give half my factory to have a service flag here—even if the blue star turned to gold.

MRS. A. (*goes to her husband and puts her hand on his shoulder. Gently.*). I understand, Matthew, but perhaps our boy is serving his country somewhere.

MR. A. Then why doesn't he write?

MRS. A. He will some day.

MR. A. (*sitting down by library table*). Yes. (*Sarcastically.*) He may send a postcard from Honolulu.

MRS. A. (*agitated*). Matthew, are you keeping anything from me? Have you found out something about Frank that you haven't told me?

MR. A. (*slowly*). Yesterday I saw Harry Adams, one of Frank's old pals, and he told me that he was sure that Frank was taking a pleasure trip to Honolulu.

MRS. A. I don't believe it. He wouldn't take a pleasure trip now. He's not a slacker.

MR. A. (*bitterly*). I wish I had your faith in him. Young Adams had good evidence. He knows a fellow who met Frank in New York and heard him say he was going to get his ticket.

MRS. A. (*taking up her knitting again*). How could he buy a ticket for Honolulu? He didn't have the money.

MR. A. (*bitterly*). Oh, he took plenty of money with him.

MRS. A. What do you mean, Matthew?

MR. A. (*after a moment's hesitation*). I didn't want to tell you, Mary, until I felt sure, but now I don't see how I can be mistaken. The night Frank went away I brought home a package of bills from the factory and hid it in that drawer between the pages of a magazine. (*Pointing to drawer in*

library table.) The money came in after banking hours. The next morning the money and Frank had disappeared. Nothing else in the house had been disturbed.

MRS. A. (*stunned by the blow*). I can't believe that our boy took the money.

MR. A. Who else could have taken it? Certainly not Katie.

MRS. A. No, Katie has been with us for years and she is as honest as daylight. Oh, I can't understand, but I know the boy didn't mean to do wrong.

KATIE, *the Irish cook, appears at the door down R. She wears a blue cotton work dress and a large kitchen apron. She is about forty and has red hair, bright eyes and quick ways.*

KATIE. Oh, Missus Austin, will ye come and see the birthday cake? It's riz fine.

MR. A. (*sharply*). Birthday cake?

MRS. A. Yes, we've always had one for Frank and I couldn't let the day go by even if the boy—(*breaks down and cries*).

KATIE. Niver moind, M'am, it's a grand cake. I've bin making cake for Master Frank iver since he was thot high (*holding her hand at height of five-year-old boy*) and this is the grandest oine I've iver made. "Katie," he'd say, "you're the best cook in this town," and thin I'd give him anither piece. Fine boy, Master Frank.

MR. A. (*getting up to hide his emotion*). I'm going to work in my war garden. This warm weather is making the weeds grow like the dickens. (*He goes out.*)

KATIE (*goes up to MRS. A. and speaks to her sympathetically*). Don't be so sad, M'am. I'll tell ye something.

MRS. A. What is it, Katie?

KATIE (*mysteriously*). Master Frank's coming home.

MRS. A. (*sadly*). I know, Katie, some time.

KATIE (*with confidence*). He's coming today.

STELLA (*looking up*). Have you secret information, Katie?

KATIE. That's what I have, Miss Stella. Last night I wint to thot fortune teller I told ye about.

MRS. A. For shame, Katie. That's superstitious.

KATIE. But she's a wonderful woman. She sat there and looked at the cairds and looked at me and thin she told me just whot I was thinking in me own moind.

STELLA. Did she say anything about Frank? (*She goes to the window and rearranges flowers in the vase.*)

KATIE. I'm coming to thot. She looked at the cairds and she said, "I see a young mon. I don't think he's a relation." I spoke up, "Shure, he's not a relation, he's a frind." She looks kind of queer like and goes on. "He's far away, but he's coming nearer, nearer, nearer." (*Triumphantly.*) And he is.

MRS. A. I wonder where he is today. In the night I lie awake thinking of him—wondering what he is doing out in the world, so far away. If he is sick and suffering is there anyone to take care of him, anyone to minister to him? Oh, my boy!

KATIE (*wipes her eyes on her apron and then smiles*). This morning whin I was doing the breakfast dishes I dropped the dish towel and thot's a sure sign somebody's coming.

STELLA (*looking out of the window*). Yes, Nancy Wheeler is coming across the street now.

KATIE (*undaunted*). These signs mean something. You'll see.

MRS. A. (*rising*). Come, Katie, we'll go in the kitchen and look at the cake.

KATIE. Yes, Ma'm, and make the frosting.

MRS. A. Not frosting. You know the Food Administrator in Washington doesn't want us to use sugar for frosting cakes.

KATIE. And, shure, hoo'll he know?

MRS. A. We want to obey his rules and help the soldiers.

KATIE. Shure, I want to help the brave boys thot's fighting, but I think thot Food Mon in Washington has got a

big job bossing all the cooks in this country. (MRS. A. goes out door R., followed by KATIE.)

NANCY WHEELOCK comes in from L. She is about nineteen, vivacious, independent and attractive. She is like a fresh breeze on a summer day, with buoyancy in her step and merriment in her eyes. She wears a simple shirt waist and skirt and a sailor hat. She carries an old pair of long white kid gloves and a monthly magazine.

NANCY. Here, Stella, I've brought you a pair of gloves for the aviators' jackets.

STELLA. Oh, good. I need some more. My cousin in Chicago writes that there is great need for these aviators' jackets lined with kid gloves. They are so warm and durable. (Coming down to C.) Nancy, won't you take off your hat and sit down?

NANCY. No, thank you, I'm too busy, but since I had a little time off this afternoon, I thought I would stop in with the gloves. (Going up to STELLA.) I'm contributing my one and only pair. I don't need party gloves any more. I can't even afford the gasoline to clean them. (Looking at the gloves with a reminiscent smile.) Do you know when I bought these?

STELLA. No, tell me.

NANCY. It was last year. I had an invitation to the Freshman hop.

STELLA. You went with Frank, didn't you?

NANCY. Yes, and I wanted him to think I looked as well as the other girls. I couldn't afford a new dress and I said to myself, "Nancy Wheelock, make over your white dress, buy a pair of long kid gloves and hold your head high." Buying the gloves was the hardest part for me, but I saved enough from what I earned waiting on table in the college dining-room to pay for them. (She tosses the gloves to STELLA, who catches them.) Goodbye, dear souvenirs of days that are passed. Oh, here's that magazine I borrowed ages ago.

STELLA. You didn't need to return it.

NANCY. There was some special article in it I wanted to read, but I've forgotten what it was and have been too busy to even look in it. (*She lays magazine on table.*)

STELLA (*sighing as she puts the gloves on the library table*). We can't have so many good times now that most of the boys are gone.

NANCY. Men in this town are growing scarcer and scarcer, but we can't stop to drop any tears on the dear, departed "good times." There's too much to do. The boys are in France fighting for us and the girls they've left behind them must do work to win the war.

STELLA (*lackadaisically*). Of course we must do something, but there is so little for women to do.

NANCY (*facing her in indignant surprise*). Stella Austin, how can you say that there is so little to do, when America needs the whole woman power of the nation. Our boys are fighting and we must back them.

STELLA. How?

NANCY. The boys had to leave their jobs behind them and we must take up their work. We may have to put on overalls and get our hands dirty; but we'll do it (*with determination*); we'll do the hardest kind of work to win this war.

STELLA. But you have always worked. It's easy for you.

NANCY. No, it isn't easy but I'm glad I have the chance to work.

STELLA. You've always had pluck.

NANCY (*laughing*). I need it now. I have a man's job.

STELLA. Where?

NANCY. I have taken Tom's place in the machine shop.

STELLA. What queer work for a girl!

NANCY (*showing her hands*). See, my hands show the signs of my trade—they're rough and calloused; but what difference does it make? (*With deep feeling.*) Some of the boys are giving their hands—their arms—their eyes—their lives. Oh, Stella, we girls must hold the home lines until the boys come back.

STELLA. But women should keep to their own line of work.

NANCY (*going toward the sewing table*). There's no time now for women to be doing little fiddling things—punching holes in doilies and sewing them up again or embroidering bath towels when our boys in the trenches can't even get a bath. (*She picks up a fancy bath towel that lies on the sewing table and STELLA snatches it away from her.*) Caught in the act. (*With a laugh.*)

STELLA. Well, even if I spend time on what you call fiddling things, I'm doing my bit, too. (*Throws down the towel and sits in chair to L. of library table.*)

NANCY. It's not our bit, but our best that Uncle Sam asks.

STELLA (*becoming thoughtful*). Our best? But Uncle Sam isn't asking anything of me.

NANCY. Oh, yes, he is. Every young woman in America must enlist.

STELLA (*surprised*). Enlist?

NANCY. The nation's call has come to the women and throughout the length and breadth of the country they are answering, "America, we are here." (*She takes a letter from her bag.*) You remember Jane Sheldon, who was a senior last year?

STELLA. Yes, Senator Sheldon's daughter, the most popular girl in college.

NANCY. I used to wait on her and she's a trump. (*Sitting in chair to right of sewing table.*) I had this letter from her this morning. She's nursing in one of the cantonments. She writes: "To live and to work here is a privilege; it means roughing and pioneering, I admit, but that is what makes the work worth while. It's a joy to do for these brave boys." Then she tells of the great need of nurses, at home, in the cantonments, and in France. The training schools are sending out a call for recruits. (*Wistfully.*) I should love to be a nurse, but I know that I must hold Tom's job here and support mother, while he is over there.

STELLA. Oh, I couldn't be a nurse. I've always had people do for me, instead of doing for others.

NANCY. That's just it. But this war is bringing a lot of changes. Labor is scarce. The rich can't have so many folks to wait on them. I guess we'll all have to run our lives on the cafeteria, self-help plan.

STELLA. I've always hated those places where you have to wait on yourself. It seems so common to have to carry a tray and help yourself to the napkins and the food.

NANCY. We ought to be glad of the chance to help ourselves to bread and butter. In Belgium, in France, in Russia, Serbia and Poland, they are starving.

STELLA. But it's different here. We are used to having things.

NANCY. When I was waiting on table I found out that some folks always had more than their share of the cream and so the rest had to take the skimmed milk. Now things are being evened up a bit and we all are going without for the sake of our soldier boys. (*Rising and going towards C.*) We are learning to pull together. It's hands all round.

STELLA (*with wonder*). Hands all round?

NANCY. Yes, don't you see? Rich and poor, men and women, America and her allies—all in one great fellowship. Oh, Stella, don't you want to have a part in this? Doesn't your heart beat with the world heart?

STELLA (*moved, but still reluctant*). Nancy, don't talk that way. You make me feel so selfish.

NANCY. Think of what the boys are doing over there. How brave they are! They are fighting, suffering, dying. Why, nearly all the boys in town have gone—Tom, Frank—

STELLA (*sadly*). Not Frank.

NANCY. Yes, Frank. I know that somewhere he is playing the game, too. Wasn't he the best half-back on his team? He may have been a bit wild, but he always played fair, and I know that Frank Austin is not holding back when his country and the world need him.

STELLA. You're like mother, full of faith.

NANCY. I know he's brave. Why, he's full of pluck and spirit. You remember how crazy he was about flying.

STELLA. Yes, that was one thing that got him in trouble in college. He skipped his exams to go out to the aviation field.

NANCY. Well, I believe he has enlisted—in the army, the navy, the marines, the aviation corps—somewhere he is fighting for liberty.

STELLA. If he was going to enlist he wouldn't have left home in the way he did.

NANCY. It's not a crime to be expelled from college for breaking a lot of foolish rules.

STELLA (*significantly*). That's not what I mean.

NANCY. What do you mean?

STELLA. Father has just told us that Frank took a large roll of bills the night he disappeared.

NANCY (*thoughtful*). Where was the money?

STELLA (*pointing to library table*). In that drawer. Father brought it home from the factory because it was too late to deposit it in the bank and he hid it there. When he has to keep money in the house he always hides it in some place like that.

NANCY. And why does he think Frank took it?

STELLA. Because no one else had been there.

NANCY. Is he sure the money is gone?

STELLA. Why, of course. He hunted everywhere for it.

NANCY. I never knew a man who could find anything. (*Looks at table.*) May I look in that drawer?

STELLA. Certainly, but it's foolish. I'm sure father must have looked thoroughly. (*NANCY pulls out the drawer and begins to take out the things—papers, paper cutter, magazines, etc. Finally the drawer is empty and there is no sign of the money.*) You see—the money is gone.

NANCY (*wrinkling her brows in thought*). Were the bills flat or rolled?

STELLA. I don't know—flat, I think. Father usually hides them that way.

NANCY (*undaunted, takes up the magazines and goes through them all but finds nothing and pauses*). I know Frank would not steal; he's not that kind of a boy. You are sure your father put the money in a magazine?

STELLA. Father has a perfect memory, he can't be mistaken.

NANCY. That magazine I brought back. It was in that drawer when you gave it to me. (*She pounces on the magazine and shakes it open and a flat package of bills drops out.*) Here's the money.

STELLA (*greatly excited*). Why, it must have been there all the time.

NANCY. Of course. Frank never touched it.

STELLA (*goes to door down R.*). Oh, mother, come here. Nancy has found something.

NANCY. The money is safe and you'll see that we'll have good news from Frank, too.

STELLA. Katie dropped the dish towel this morning and she says that means somebody is coming.

NANCY. Who knows?

MRS. AUSTIN *comes in greatly excited and STELLA holds up the money.*

STELLA. Here's the money father thought Frank took.

MRS. A. (*is speechless, then a look of joy comes into her face and she sinks into a chair by the table*). Oh, my boy—I'm so glad. Stella, call your father. He must know right now.

STELLA (*goes to front door and calls*). Father, mother wants you.

MRS. A. Nancy, I'm so grateful to you.

NANCY. When Stella told me the story I was determined to find the money, because I knew that Frank hadn't taken it.

MR. AUSTIN *comes in without his coat, red in the face from working in the garden and carrying a spade.*

MR. A. (*hearing NANCY's last words*). Hadn't taken what?

NANCY (*holding up the bills*). This money.

MR. A. Where did you find that?

NANCY. Between the leaves of this magazine which I borrowed of you months ago and never looked at it until just now.

MR. A. This is truly remarkable.

NANCY. Somehow I am so excited about finding this money. (*Joyfully.*) I think I must feel as the woman in the parable did when she found the lost piece of silver—or the shepherd when he carried home that lost lamb. It seems as if we had found Frank.

MRS. A. Oh, Matthew, how could you believe that the boy took the money?

MR. A. I see now that I did him an injustice in this matter, but he had done so many wild, reckless things I thought he might have done that, too.

MRS. A. (*with intense feeling*). If we could only see him and make things right.

MR. A. I can never forgive him, for not writing you and causing you so much worry.

MRS. A. Before he left he said that he would never trouble us again while we were ashamed of him.

(*A long clear whistle outside.*)

NANCY (*going to the window*). Listen. That whistle sounds familiar.

They are all startled. NANCY looks out, smiles. The outside door opens and FRANK comes in. He is a happy-go-lucky fellow of nineteen with winning ways. He wears a uniform. His right arm hangs helpless at his side. In his left hand he carries a traveling bag, which he sets down near the door. He stands at the door, smiling, but hesitating as if not sure of the welcome he will receive. For a moment all are speechless with surprise. Then MRS. AUSTIN rushes to him and throws her arms around him.

MRS. A. (*with a cry of joy*). Frank!

FRANK (*kissing her with great feeling*). Mother.

MRS. A. (*releases him from her embrace and steps back a little to look at him*). I'm so happy to have you again. (*With gentle reproach.*) I have looked and looked for a letter.

FRANK. I waited until I could bring you good news. (*With a look at his father, who stands silent at R.*) Until you would not be ashamed of me.

MRS. A. I have never lost faith in you, Frank, night or day.

FRANK (*he puts his left arm around her affectionately*). Well, it's all right now, isn't it, mother dear? You'll forgive me, won't you? (*With a winning smile.*) And love me a little?

MRS. A. With my whole heart.

FRANK (*looks at NANCY, who still stands by the window and who has frozen strangely shy*). Nancy, I'm glad you're here. (*MRS. AUSTIN goes over to speak to MR. AUSTIN as NANCY comes up to FRANK. NANCY holds out both hands to FRANK, who takes them in his left hand.*)

NANCY. Welcome home. I knew you would come in uniform.

FRANK. I couldn't keep out of a big thing like this war.

NANCY (*suddenly notices his helpless right arm*). Oh, you've been hurt.

FRANK (*keeping hold of her hands*). Just a little accident. I still have one good hand to hold yours.

NANCY (*pulling her hands away with a mischievous laugh*). I didn't give them to you for keeps.

FRANK. I wish you would, Nan. The fire in your eyes is more dangerous than a Hun machine gun.

MRS. A. (*comes up to FRANK with motherly tenderness*). You're wounded, dear. You must be tired from your trip. (*STELLA moves the big chair from L. of library table to C.*) Sit here and rest. (*His mother pushes him gently into the chair and STELLA leans over and kisses him.*)

FRANK. Hello, Sis, what have you been doing?

STELLA. Lining aviators' jackets with kid gloves.

FRANK (*laughing*). I didn't know that you had been working for me.

(MR. AUSTIN *still holds back. His face shows pride as he looks at his son in uniform, but his stubbornness keeps him rooted to his place. Once in a while FRANK glances at his father and their eyes almost meet, but neither is ready to speak to the other yet.*)

STELLA. Tell us about yourself.

MRS. A. (*touching his shoulder with affectionate pride and then looking at her husband*). And about this uniform. (MRS. AUSTIN *stands back of the chair, leaning over him tenderly, STELLA sits by the sewing table, NANCY sits on a low stool down R. looking at FRANK and MR. AUSTIN still stands at R.*)

FRANK. When I left home I worked my way to New York. I was short of money, you see. (*All glance significantly at MR. AUSTIN.*) I stayed in New York until I had earned enough to take me to England, where I enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps. It was the quickest way into the service.

NANCY. I knew you would come home with flying colors.

FRANK (*with great spirit*). Air fighting is the greatest adventure in the war.

MRS. A. (*with solicitude*). But how were you wounded, dear?

FRANK. When I got to France they put me in the bombing squadron and I had some excitement, believe me. One morning I was flying alone and high and had passed far into the enemy lines. My engine was working perfectly and its steady roar gave me confidence. Suddenly I caught sight of a German plane. I swooped directly in front of him—(MRS. AUSTIN *gives a cry of fear and FRANK stops suddenly and reaches for her hand.*) Never mind, mother dear, we won't talk about it. Well, I brought down my man, but another Hun got me. I fell in the enemy lines, but finally escaped. A bullet in this arm and another in my chest put me in the hospital.

STELLA (*eagerly*). Were you in the hospital long?

FRANK. Four weeks. And, Stella, I wish you could see what those nurses do. They are angels. If it hadn't been for one of those little "sisters" I would have "gone west," as the boys say, the day they brought me in.

STELLA. Do they need more nurses?

FRANK. They will never be able to take care of our wounded boys unless hundreds more go. I wish you girls over here could see the hospitals over there and know what it means to be a nurse.

STELLA (*deeply interested*). Tell—me—more about it.

FRANK. I wish I could describe it so that you could see it all. As I lay there in the candlelighted ward I used to watch the stretchers being brought in and the sweet-faced nurses going about from cot to cot. Why! with those ministering angels to cheer them up the boys smile even at the gates of death.

STELLA. A hospital must be a sad place.

FRANK. A sad place? No, it's a haven of rest to the wounded. It makes us well and sends us out to play our part again. Tommies, Poilus and Yanks are all wild to get back into the thick of it. That's what you hear all the time in the hospital—"When can I go back to the front?" It's the doctors and nurses who make new men of us, so that we can "carry on" 'till we win and all the boys say, "God bless 'em."

STELLA (*stands up with sudden decision*). I'm going to be a nurse. I'll enroll in the army school of nursing today.

FRANK. Good for you, Sis.

NANCY (*jumps up and goes to STELLA and puts her arm around her*). Now there'll be two stars on the Austin service flag—one for the little nurse and (*with a radiant look at FRANK*) one for the brave soldier of the sky.

MR. A. (*comes up to FRANK with pride in his face*. FRANK rises instantly and stands erect and respectful before his father. MR. AUSTIN puts his hands on FRANK's shoul-

ders and looks into the lad's clear, honest eyes). My boy, this is the happiest day of my life.

FRANK. I know that I have been wild and thoughtless and given you and mother a lot of worry. I'm sorry.

MR. A. You have wiped that all out by the big thing you've done and tomorrow I want to walk down Main Street with you in that uniform and I want this whole town to see my son—*my son*.

FRANK. If the people here could only know what I've seen over there every young man in the country would want to be in this war.

MR. A. My boy, over there you have gotten hold of something—something big.

FRANK. When this arm is strong I'm going back to France and fight until the world is safe for democracy. (*He puts his left hand in his pocket and draws out a small object.*) Here, Dad, is a little souvenir I brought home. (*His father takes it and looks at it in surprise.*)

MR. A. The war cross!

FRANK. They gave it to me in the hospital just before they sent me home.

MR. A. (*holds the war cross in his hand lovingly. He is overcome by his emotion. He hands it to MRS. AUSTIN.*) Mary, they gave this to *our* boy.

MRS. A. (*takes it with tears of joy in her eyes*). I knew you would be proud of him some day.

MR. A. Proud? I'm the proudest man in the United States.

KATIE *appears at the door down R. with the birthday cake with lighted candles.*

KATIE. Welcome home, Master Frank, and miny happy returns of the day.

CURTAIN.

FRANK. MRS. A.

KATIE.

MR. A.

NANCY. STELLA.

Safety First

By SHELDON FARMER

Price, 25 Cents

Farce-comedy, in 3 acts; 5 males, 5 females. Time, 2¼ hours.

Scenes: A parlor and a garden, easily arranged. A sprightly farce full of action and with a unique plot teeming with unexpected turns and twists that will make the audience wonder "what on earth is coming next." Behind the fun and movement lurks a great moral: Always tell the truth to your wife. The cast includes three young men, a funny policeman, a terrible Turk, two young ladies, a society matron, a Turkish maiden and Mary O'Finnigan, the Irish cook. The antics of the terror-stricken husband, the policeman, the dude and the Irish cook start the audience smiling at 8:15 and send them home with aching sides from the tornado of fun at 10:40. Suitable for performance anywhere, but recommended for lodges, clubs and schools. Not a coarse or suggestive line in the play.

SYNOPSIS

Act I.—Jack's lil suburban home. A misplaced husband. "He kissed me good-bye at eighteen minutes after seven last night, and I haven't laid eyes on him since." The Irish maid is full of sympathy but she imagines a crime has been committed. Elmer, the college boy, drops in. And the terrible Turk drops out. "Sure the boss has eloped wid a Turkey!" Jerry and Jack come home after a horrible night. Explanations. "We joined the Shriners, I'm the Exalted Imported Woggle and Jack is the Bazook!" A detective on the trail. Warrants for John Doe, Richard Roe and Mary Moe. "We're on our way to Florida!"

Act II.—A month later, Jack and Jerry reported drowned at sea. The Terrible Turk looking for Zuleika. The return of the prodigals. Ghosts! Some tall explanations are in order. "I never was drowned in all my life, was I, Jerry?" "We were lashed to a mast and we floated and floated and floated!" A couple of heroes. The Terrible Turk hunting for Jack and Jerry. "A Turk never injures an insane man." Jack feigns insanity. "We are leaving this roof forever!" The end of a perfect day.

Act III.—Mrs. Bridger's garden. Elmer and Zuleika start on their honeymoon. Mabel forgives Jack, but her mamma does not. They decide to elope. Jerry's scheme works. The two McNutts. "Me middle name is George Washington, and I cannot tell a lie." The detective falls in the well. "It's his ghost!" Jack and Jerry preparing for the elopement. Mary Ann appears at the top of the ladder. A slight mistake. "It's a burglar, mum, I've got him!" The Terrible Turk finds his Zuleika. Happiness at last.

Foiled, By Heck!

By FREDERICK G. JOHNSON

Price, 25 Cents

A truly rural drama, in 1 scene and several dastardly acts; 3 males, 3 females. Time, 35 minutes. **Scene:** The mortgaged home of the homespun drama, between sunup and sundown. **Characters:** Reuben, a nearly self-made man. His wife, who did the rest. Their perfectly lovely daughter. Clarence, a rustic hero, by ginger! Olivia, the plaything of fate, poor girl. Sylvester, with a viper's heart. Curses! Curses! Already he has the papers. A screaming travesty on the old-time "b'gosh" drama.

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The Call of the Colors

By LINDSEY BARBEE

Price, 25 Cents

A patriotic play in 2 acts; 4 males, 10 females. Time, 1½ hours. Scenes: 2 interiors, easily arranged. In act one a Red Cross gauze room is shown. A true-to-life picture; the awkward worker reprimanded for going a sixteenth of an inch too far; the suspicion of spies in the room; the girls' opinion of slackers; their hero, Sergeant Hilton, back from "over there"; his mysterious little black book and the joy when Harrison dons the khaki. Tense interest, lightened by comedy. In act two the scene is transported to a French château near the firing line. A plucky girl unmasks a spy and saves a repository of ammunition from bombardment. Military enthusiasm, mysterious intrigue and a war-time love story—truly a combination symbolic of the days in which we live. A French peasant girl, an excellent part.

SYNOPSIS

Act. I.—The Red Cross gauze room has various visitors. Sergeant Hilton proves the chief topic of conversation and the strange Miss Smith is cordially welcomed. Harrison Ray is declared a slacker—and Sergeant Hilton's little black book causes much speculation. Miriam makes an announcement; Harrison offers an explanation—and the boys go marching by!

Act II.—Sergeant Hilton renews his acquaintance with Miriam and learns of the ammunition hidden in the village. The Germans arrive. The Sergeant loses his little black book—and Vilette brings news of the enemy. Miss Smith finds the book and sends a message. By means of the secret telephone, Cecile communicates with the other château—and the firing begins. Sergeant Hilton returns—in another rôle; a bugle sounds and the Stars and Stripes go floating by. The Sergeant, taken unawares, faces a revolver. Harrison Ray tells his story; the mystery is solved and the day is saved!

Lottie Sees It Through

By RAGNA B. ESKIL

Price, 15 Cents

Patriotic playlet; 3 males, 4 females. Time, 35 minutes. Scene: A scantily furnished living room. This timely play should induce any community to give liberally. Written for the Red Cross, but with the change of a few words it will plead for the Liberty Loan, the Y. M. C. A. fund or any other cause as worthy. Its action is based on the elemental question—can one refuse to give to his country and yet be at ease with his conscience? Still it is not a somber or dreary play—it has its light touches. It stirs the heart and its climax will arouse a fervor of patriotism only comparable to a religious revival. If unable to produce this play, get someone to read it as it cannot help but stimulate action.

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